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Hand Book on Community Organization

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FOREWORD.

This bulletin has to do principally with the methods of organization and gives only a general outline of the work that should be undertaken by community councils. Without anticipating the program for readjustment that is expected to come from a state conference soon to be held under the auspices of the State Council of Defense, the first phase of reconstruction work as indicated herein is, we believe, fully sufficient to justify every special effort toward community organization.

The later usefulness and advantage of such organization to each community itself also is ample reason for this state-wide movement, urged by the national government and now undertaken in California.

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WHY COMMUNITY COUNCILS.

The men and women who are keeping in close touch with the undercurrent of social and economic changes in these kaleidoscopic times are nearly all convinced that democratic community organizations are necessary, especially those organized on a uniform basis throughout the land.

On this subject President Wilson has addressed a circular letter to all state councils of defense as follows:

“Your state, in extending its national defense organization by the creation of community councils, is in my opinion making an advance of vital significance. It will, I believe, result when thoroughly carried out in welding the nation together as no nation of great size has ever been welded before. It will build up from the bottom an understanding and sympathy and unity of purpose and effort which will no doubt have an immediate and decisive effect upon our great undertaking. You will find it, I think, not so much a new task as a unification of existing efforts, a fusion of energies now too much scattered and at times somewhat confused into one harmonious and effective power.

“It is only by extending your organization to small communities that every citizen of the state can be reached and touched with the inspiration of the common cause. The school-house has been suggested as an apt though

not essential center for your local council. It symbolizes one of the first fruits of such an organization, namely, the spreading of the realization of the great truth that it is each one of us as an individual citizen upon whom rests the ultimate responsibility. Through this great new organization we will express with added emphasis our will to win and our confidence in the utter righteousness of our purpose."

It is obvious that when the President wrote this letter he had in mind not only community organization to aid in helping win the war but also for the greater and broader purpose of "welding the nation together."

That alone is reason enough for all the effort and energy that all of us in California may put into the present campaign for community organization.

It is necessary also that every community organize in order to be better prepared to receive our soldier boys when they return from the camps and the trenches.

It is necessary, too, that every community organize to perform its share of human kindness to the millions of stricken people in the war-shocked districts of Europe and Asia.

Every community should likewise organize in order to help solve the social and economic prob-

lems that come with the reconstruction and readjustment period following the war.

They should organize in order to bring to each of themselves and their posterity the greater blessings of liberty that are promised to all mankind out of the war's seething cauldron.

And so, also, there should be in every section of California an increased community spirit and pride, a more fervid community zeal and enthusiasm, a greater quickening of community conscience, and a keener spirit of community devotion and neighborly brotherhood.

Now that we know what can be accomplished by organized destruction we can look forward with confidence to those wonderful and glorious things that can be accomplished by organized construction.

Uniform Plan Necessary for Greatest General Efficiency.

The State Council of Defense has had a careful and painstaking survey made of community organizations in this and other states, and, from this survey, it has evolved a broad plan of community organization which it believes, when fully understood, will meet the approval of nearly every man and woman interested in this vital work.

The chief function of the State Council of Defense toward the community organization will be that of *service*. After its organization the destiny of every community council, for better or for worse, will be left almost entirely to the people in its community district.

It is not the policy or intention of the State Council of Defense to govern the community councils. Each community council will be sovereign in itself. The State Council of Defense will, of course, promote them, establish them on a uniform basis, give them official standing, render technical and wholesale services to them, and mediate between them on the one hand and the state and national governments on the other.

The state council will also supply the community councils with all sorts of information. It will keep them in touch with all important state, national and international matters. It will assist other state departments in getting into closer touch with the communities and to be of more direct aid to them.

Above all, the State Council of Defense desires to establish the community councils upon such a solid and permanent basis that they, and all of them, will be in active existence long after the State Council of Defense and the Council of National Defense may have become mere matters of history and generally forgotten.

Community Councils Defined.

The appellation "community council" has, during the war, been generally applied to local war organizations. But it is no longer confined to so narrow a meaning in California. Here it is applied to the very broadest form of community organization.

In the country districts it will combine all the advantages of farm centers and the like with the advantages of civic centers, as well as all additional matters that may be of local interest or that may tend to local advancement and betterment. In cities and towns the community council will combine the community center idea together with the plan of community councils outlined by the Council of National Defense as well as all other matters of community improvement and betterment.

In a word, a community council is an organization prepared and ready to perform special and particular service for its community, and possessing, at the present time at least, peculiar facilities and opportunities, through the county divisions, the State Council of Defense and the Council of National Defense, to put the busy clerk, business, professional and laboring man and woman in the city and the busy farmer and laboring man and woman in the country into closer personal touch with all the good things, with all the vital things, with all the pulsating

possibilities and opening opportunities that may be of local or personal interest. It will also provide an everyday outlet for community expression and community initiative.

“Community Day.”

Upon request of Chas. C. Moore, Director of the State Council of Defense, Governor Wm. D. Stephens has appointed Friday, December 27, 1918, as “Community Day.” There are approximately five thousand communities in California, and it is expected that a community mass meeting will be held in every one of them on “Community Day.” Every member of every community should lend his or her best effort to make that mass meeting a success. Literary and patriotic exercises can be held along the line indicated later in this pamphlet.

Plan of Organization.

In every county, upon recommendation of the chairman of the County Division of the State Council of Defense, there has been appointed a county committee on community councils. Usually this county committee consists of five persons: two women and three men. The chairman of this county committee, by virtue of his office, has been made a member of the county division. Where there is a county Farm Adviser, he also has been added to the committee.

The principal duties of the county committee on community councils are:

- (a) To divide the county into community districts, convenient for the residents of each district and small enough so that the child, the housewife and the plain man can fully take part in the activities of every local council.
- (b) To appoint a local temporary chairman for every community district.
- (c) Where advisable, to appoint county field deputies to assist the local chairmen in their general program.
- (d) To see that every local chairman prepares for the mass meeting in his or her community on "Community Day."
- (e) If any local chairman fails to do his duty, to remove him and appoint some other active person in his place.
- (f) To assist local chairmen in preparing for the said mass meeting and to enlist the aid and co-operation of every other state and local organization.
- (g) Where active farm centers and community organizations already exist, the county committee will endeavor to have these

existing organizations co-operate with and join in this state-wide plan because of mutual aid and benefit. Many have already voted to join. If the existing organization is entirely out of line with the principles upon which this state-wide plan is based, then the county committee will endeavor to have the members of that organization reconstruct or revise it so that it may take up this broader work.

- (h) To otherwise assist and aid in making every community council in its county a permanent success.

The Local Temporary Chairman.

In every community-district a chairman is appointed to look after all preliminary matters of local organization, and prepare an adequate and suitable program for the community mass meeting on "Community Day." His office is temporary and ends with the mass meeting. In order that the community council shall be fully and completely democratic, it is necessary that it regularly elect its own permanent officers.

If the man or woman acting as local chairman is a suitable and proper person for permanent chairman, he or she will probably be so retained, but no temporary chairman should be continued in office who has been inactive and sluggish in

the preliminary work and who is not disinterestedly working for the good of the whole community.

Where farm centers or other community organizations already actively exist, it is not necessary to hold an election of officers, for they have doubtlessly already been elected by their respective organizations. This naturally is a matter for each community to decide for itself, keeping always in mind the best interests of its particular community.

Every man, woman and child in every community, no matter his race, citizenship, or social condition, is entitled to membership in the community council. Disloyalty should be the only cause for rejection. Existing organizations which do not provide for membership and active participation of every such person in their respective communities should be reorganized in keeping with these broader principles.

In Cities and Towns.

As stated heretofore, the organization in cities and towns will combine the idea of community centers with the plan for community councils of the Council of National Defense, together with every other broad feature and factor of community improvement and betterment.

The work of reconstruction will be especially important in the cities. Immediately after or-

ganization, the community councils in the cities, as in the country districts, will probably be requested to make an immediate survey of their respective districts in order to gather full information and data regarding men who have gone into war service.

Naturally, community work in the cities will be somewhat different from that in the country. It will need to be more intensified along humanitarian lines. There will be perhaps greater opportunities for social work, with a likelihood of greater permanent results. At the same time, it will require more energy, patience and perseverance on the part of local leaders. While most of the suggestions contained in this bulletin may be used in the city communities, yet it naturally follows that all of them will not apply, just as some of the suggestions herein contained will not be practical in the small towns and country districts.

Above all, we must endeavor to engender a greater community spirit in the city districts. From the standpoint of democratic ideas it is not right that families should live for months, and sometimes years, in the same block, and even in the same house, without knowing each other. The dangers of the war have brought men and women closer to each other, and this feeling of renewed comradeship should be cemented by our community organization. Oftentimes it is only

necessary that we become acquainted with people in order to appreciate them more fully.

In Country Districts.

As stated before, our plan for the country districts will combine the idea of the community council, as outlined by the Council of National Defense, with the general idea of the farm bureau, already in existence in many country districts in California, together with many other features that will tend to broaden the scope of community advancement and enterprise. The people in the country are asked to form these local organizations not only to meet the problems of reconstruction and social and economic readjustment during the period following the war, but also in order that they may unite for mutual, social and commercial benefit.

Official Name.

It will be necessary for every community to select a name for its organization, preferably the name of the school district in which it meets, or some other designation that will indicate its location in the county. The official name of an organization will be "Community Branch."

In other words, if a community in Imperial County should select the name of "Lincoln," after the name of its school district, then the official name of that community council would be "The Lincoln Community Branch of the

Imperial Division of the State Council of Defense.' This does not mean that community councils will be especially directed by the State Council of Defense. This official name is adopted principally so the community council will have official standing not only with the State Council of Defense, but also with the Council of National Defense.

Charter.

As soon as the community council organizes, votes to assume such official title, and elects permanent officers, a charter will be issued to it from the State Council of Defense. This charter will signify the official standing of the community council and may be revoked by the State Council of Defense if the local organization should become inactive.

Existing community organizations will likewise be given a charter upon their voting formally to join in this state-wide plan.

To Local Temporary Chairmen:

As soon as you have replied to the circular letter from the State Council of Defense, accepting the office of local temporary chairman, a Commission of Service from the State Council of Defense will be issued to you. This commission will be printed in such manner as to be suitable for framing and then to be hung in your home or office.

Your chief duty is to prepare for the mass meeting on "Community Day." The matter is so important that it is worthy of your every effort and most careful thought and consideration. We suggest that, immediately upon your acceptance, you appoint a committee on arrangements of three or more persons whose duty will be to assist you in your general plan for the mass meeting and for the permanent organization of your community council. A program committee should also be appointed to prepare a program for "Community Day." It will be necessary for your committee on arrangements to provide a meeting place, preferably at a convenient school house and to do all other things necessary to make the mass meeting and local organization a continued success. You can, of course, appoint such other committees as you deem advisable. Naturally, you are responsible for the success or failure of the enterprise in your community.

But do not expect too much at the start. It is better that your organization start slowly like a locomotive and increase the momentum rather than to proceed in an inverse manner.

The Mass Meeting.

We think it best that the general program in each community on "Community Day" depend mainly upon the character and quality of the talent in that locality. It should be left largely to the committee on arrangements and the com-

mittee on program to decide just what literary and patriotic exercises should be held. The local chairmen and these committees will know best what appeals to the people of their particular community.

We would suggest, however, that a Four-minute Man, or other speaker for the evening, be procured. Also a song leader for community singing, and that some minister or priest, or other proper person, be asked to utter a prayer during the evening for the men who have fallen in this great fight for democracy. In addition, an American flag should be unfurled.

Let us urge upon every local chairman and committee to be careful not to make the evening exercises too long. A long, drawn-out meeting is one of the surest ways to cause a loss of interest in the organization. Let it be short and "snappy," beginning promptly and not extending over an hour and a half. An hour would be even better.

The only urgent thing that the State Council of Defense asks of you is that a permanent organization be effected in your community on "Community Day." Elect your president, vice president, secretary and other officers and decide upon an official name.

But do not attempt to complete your full, official and detailed organization at this first meeting.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PERMANENT ORGANIZATION.

As stated above, the president, vice president and secretary should be elected at the mass meeting on "Community Day." As soon as possible thereafter, if the local council deems it advisable, a constitution and by-laws should be adopted, the details of which the State Council of Defense prefers to leave entirely to each individual community. Upon request, however, the state council will furnish suggestive outlines for constitution and by-laws and give such other information and assistance as is requested.

As soon as the state council is notified that the community council has been so organized, and has also been furnished with the names of the above mentioned permanently elected officers, a charter will be issued and official Commissions of Service will be sent to the elected officers.

Where the farm bureau or existing community organization has already selected its officers and has voted to come in under our state-wide plan, it is only necessary to notify the State Council of Defense that a formal vote on a resolution or motion to that effect has been duly passed. The names of existing officers should also be sent, whereupon a charter will be issued to the local organization and Commissions of Service

sent to the officers. In this manner, these already existing organizations will receive official standing and become linked with the whole national system.

As soon as the permanent chairman receives his commission, he will be expected to appoint a Community War Board consisting of local or community heads of all war activities; such as, Red Cross, Food Administration, Women's Committee, Four-minute Men, Liberty Loan, Stanislaus Plan, War History, Nonwar Construction Board, War Savings, Library Bureau and the like. The chairman of the community council will be chairman of the Community War Board and all the work of the community pertaining to the war will be under the supervision of this board. It will correspond in the community to the County Division in the county and the War Advisory Cabinet of the State Council of Defense.

We also recommend that each community council appoint a board of directors as soon as possible, consisting of from three to ten persons, not less than one-third of the number to be women. This board should also include at least one representative from the school board of trustees.

After a consultation with the chairman of your County Division and the county representatives of the War History Committee and the Nonwar Construction Committee, the chairman of the community council should appoint a local committee who will at once begin a community survey:

First, under the supervision of the War History department to gather vital statistics regarding every man who has gone into war service from that community.

Secondly, under the supervision of the Nonwar Construction Committee, the name of which committee may be later changed, to gather information regarding the employment and the opportunity for employment for every man in service who will return to that community.

This will be one of the most important early functions of the community council and should be carried out promptly and effectively.

In country districts, especially where community councils are newly organized, a committee should be appointed to confer with the University of California:

- (a) First, through the County Farm Adviser, for the purpose of bringing to that community the splendid advantages of the Farm Bureau System.

(b) Secondly, with the University Extension Division, for the purpose of bringing to the community the excellent opportunities for education and knowledge available through that department in the form of lectures and correspondence courses.

Americanization on broad lines should also receive attentive consideration, and the local chairman should, at his earliest convenience, either personally or through a special committee, confer with the county representatives of the State Commission on Immigration for the purpose of actively assisting in this important work.

During this coming winter and spring, special stress should be given in every community to the production and conservation of food. The demand in Europe next spring and summer for every kind of food will probably be greater than ever before. While it will be undoubtedly profitable to America, it is at the same time our duty, profitable or not profitable, to help feed those millions of starving people.

Let us especially admonish every community council to refrain from the discussion of political and religious subjects, particularly such as single tax, prohibition and similar topics of dis-

cussion which do not tend to increase the spirit of comradeship and brotherly feeling among men and women. Every person is entitled to his conviction, but the community council is not the place for him to try to thrust that conviction upon his neighbors.

Furthermore, every community council should encourage thrift, economy and enterprise. Attention should be given to bringing special advantages to the children in the neighborhood, such as elementary lessons in drawing, painting, dancing, music and the like. The safeguarding of local health conditions, the relief of families of men in national service, fire protection, labor and industry, the development of local resources, development of better marketing conditions for the people in the community, the co-operative purchasing in country districts of well-bred stock, fertilizers, etc., the general improvement of social and economic conditions, and numerous other things should be given careful consideration.

The State Council of Defense, together with its county divisions, will always stand ready to give every possible service upon request from the community councils. Heretofore the State Council of Defense has been concerned with the problems of war and with the efforts, sacrifices and trials which inevitably accompany them.

Now we look forward to a hopeful future, and while the local organizations have been important in the past, they will continue to be even more so in the future. We are convinced that for lasting and permanent benefits community councils furnish the best means for community expression and community initiative. They can always be real safeguards against the danger to democracy.

And so, as the future holds alluring prospects for California, we are now organizing to make the most of these opportunities.

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